

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

SAM-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-20 ACDA-19 SAB-01 EUR-25

AF-10 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 DRC-01 /168 W

----- 001090

O 121023Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1466

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0180

BEIRUT PASS DAMASCUS

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, IS, SY

SUBJ: ISRAELI-SYRIAN ARTILLERY CLASHES ON GOLAN HEIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE ISRAELI PRESS COMMENT TODAY SAYING THAT SYRIAN BOBARDMENTS OF YESTERDAY BROKE UNWRITTEN RULE BY DELIBERATELY TARGETING CIVILIAN SETTLEMENTS, AND SUGGESTING THAT ISRAELI REACTION MAY INVOLVE AIR STRIKES OR ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT OF DAMASCUS MILITARY AIRFIELD AND OTHER TARGETS NEAR DAMASCUS, HAS AUTHORITATIVE RING. TOUGH ISRAELI REACTION WILL PROBABLY BE FOLLOWED BY MORE ACTIONS UNLESS SYRIANS DESIST, AND I FEEL THAT US SHOULD HELP CONVINCE SYRIANS OF SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION. CONFIDENTIAL

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END SUMMARY.

2. PRESS AMPLIFIES IDF SPOKESMAN STATEMENT IN EVENING FEB 11 (FBIS KYRENIA 111925Z FEB) ABOUT SYRIAN

SHELLING OF ISRAELI CIVILIAN SETTLEMENTS FEB 11 WHICH TOOK TWO CIVILIAN LIVES AND WOUNDED FIVE IDF SOLDIERS. FATALITIES WERE 26-YEAR-OLD MOTHER OF THREE CHILDREN, ESTER BEN-DAVID, RESIDENT OF RAMAT HAMAGSHIMIM (AN NRP SETTLEMENT) WHO IMMIGRATED TO ISRAEL FROM US IN 1972, AND 30-YEAR-OLD FATHER OF FIVE CHILDREN, FAUD MUKKADEM ATTALA OF YERKA, A DRUZE.

3. ACCORDING TO PRESS, FEB 11 BARRAGES WERE LARGEST SYRIAN CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS SINCE OCTOBER WAR. PRESS SAYS SYRIANS FOR SECOND DAY RUNNING USED POOR VISIBILITY AND STORMY WEATHER FOR SURPRISE ARTILLERY AND MORTAR ATTACKS ALONG ALMOST ENTIRE LENGTH OF GOLAN FRONT, AND INCLUDING ALSO FOR FIRST TIME SINCE WAR TWO CIVILIAN SETTLEMENTS, RAMAT HAMAGSHIMIM, WHICH WAS HEAVILY DAMAGED, AND EIN ZIVAN, WHERE KINDERGARTEN WAS DAMAGED. FIRE ALSO LANDED NEAR EL ROM, WHERE ORCHARDS WERE DAMAGED. FIRST BARRAGE BEGAN 9:30 AM LOCAL AND SPREAD OVER WIDE NORTHERN AREA, AND ISRAELI ARTILLERY TRIED TO SILENCE IT. SECOND BARRAGE BEGAN HOUR LATER, COVERED THE TWO SETTLEMENTS, LASTED NINETY MINUTES, AND INVOLVED PRACTICALLY ENTIRE RANGE OF GUNS AND HIGH TRAJECTORY WEAPONS AT SYRIAN DISPOSAL. PRESS COMMENTS BARRAGE REQUIRED CONSIDERABLE PLANNING AND COORDINATION TO ENSURE INITIAL SALVOES WERE OF MAXIMUM WEIGHT AND REFLECTED OBVIOUS INTENT OF INFLECTING AS MANY CIVILIAN AND MILITARY CASUALTIES AS POSSIBLE.

4. PRESS SUGGESTS-- WE BELIEVE AUTHORITATIVELY-- THAT SYRIANS UNLIKELY TO HAVE LAST WORD, SINCE ACCORDING TO PRESS THERE HAD ALWAYS BEEN UNWRITTEN SYRIAN-ISRAELI CODE PREVENTING ESCALATION IN PAST. PRESS OFFERS AS EXAMPLE ISRAELI RESTRAINT BEFORE OCTOBER IN NOT USING AIRCRAFT AGAINST FRONTLINE SYRIAN POSITIONS AS LONG AS LATTER RESTRICTED THEIR OFFENSIVE ACTIONS TO MILITARY TARGETS. BUT ANY SYRIAN SHELLING OF ISRAELI CIVILIAN TARGETS USUALLY LED TO ISRAELI AIR FORCE SORTIES. PRESS ADDS IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER IDF WILL NOW USE AIR OR WILL RAISE LEVEL OF ITS ARTILLERY
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RESPONSE BEYOND ANYTHING SYRIANS HAVE EXPERIENCED, USING IDF'S NEW ARTILLERY REINFORCEMENTS. PRESS NOTES ONE OF DAMASCUS' TWO AIRFIELDS-- THE ONE USED BY SYRIAN AIR FORCE--IS WITHIN RANGE OF ISRAELI 175-MM GUNS, AND MANY OTHERS TARGETS INCLUDING SYRIAN ARMED CONCENTRATIONS IN FRONT OF DAMASCUS ARE VULNERABLE.

5. AS FOR SYRIAN MOTIVATIONS, SOME JORANALISTS ESTIMATE SYRIA MAY BE FLEXING MUSCLE FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES PREPARATORY TO SEEKING DISENGAGEMENT ARRANGEMENT, WHILE ONE COMMENTATOR SUGGESTS BARRAGES WERE REACTION TOMRS MEIR'S DECLARATION FEB8 ABOUT ISRAELI RETENTION OF GOLAN AND ESPECIALLY TO ISRAELI PRESS

ANNOUNCEMENT FEB 11 TO PLAN TO START BUILDING URBAN CENTER
IN GOLAN NEXT MONTH (TEL AVIV 781). MAARIV EDITORIAL DESCRIBES
CEASEFIRE WITH SYRIAN AS HAVING PRACTICALY COLLAPSED AND CALLS
FO MAJOR RETALIATION.

6. COMMENT. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT THAT SIGNIFICANT IDF
REACTION IS ON THE WAY, AND ONLY IF SYRIANS THEN HALT THEIR
BOMBARDMENTS IS IDF LIKELY TO LIMIT SCOPE OF ITS SUBSEQUENT
ACTION. I TRUST THAT DEPT WILL USE ALL APPROPRIATE
CHANNELS TO CONVEY TO SYRIAN GOVT SERIOUSNESS OF
SITUATION.
KEATING

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